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ABSTRACT

Teacher education institutions are forced to come to grips with the role which their students play if a strike occurs in a school district in which their students are engaged in practicum experiences. The results of a survey of Wisconsin teacher education institutions indicate the impact of the work stoppage policy of the Wisconsin Improvement Program (WIP), a consortium of teacher education institutions in that state. (The WIP policy is presented in its entirety along with concepts from other policies identified in the survey. Relevant literature is also reviewed.) Most apparent in the Wisconsin work stoppage policies is the lack of consideration for the constitutional rights of teacher education students. (Author/JA)

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WORK STOPPAGE POLICIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Introduction. A press release in mid-1974 indicated that the largest portion of the 105 public employee strikes in Wisconsin since 1962 was the forty-three engaged in by teachers. Not only do such strikes have a direct effect on students, parents, community, and school personnel, they also affect education students who are placed in those school districts for various activities in their teacher preparation programs. Obviously, then, teacher education institutions must make provision for the functioning of their students should a work stoppage occur.*

During the summer of 1974 a survey was conducted to identify policies adopted by Wisconsin teacher education institutions in the event of a work stoppage in a school district where education students are placed for practicum experiences. Results of this survey indicate the impact of the policy of the Wisconsin Improvement Program (WIP) on work stoppage policies. That policy, of course, does not include all concepts possible and thus the other policies proved a rich source of approaches to handling work stoppage situations in the context of a teacher education program.

The limited information available in recent periodical literature is also included in this paper in an effort to provide the reader with sufficient information to develop workable and acceptable work stoppage policies.

Of the twenty-nine institutions contacted in this survey, responses were received from fifteen. Only one Wisconsin teacher preparation institution re-

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*For the purposes of this paper, a work stoppage is defined as (1) a teacher strike or (2) a lockout by the school board. Closely related, and thus included in this paper, is the slowdown on the part of the teachers.

ported no policy on work stoppages covering its students. Nine institutions reported adoption of the WIP policy in some form. Modifications of the WIP policy were designed to include student teachers and/or field experience students in addition to WIP interns. Policies clearly phrased in terms other than those of the WIP have been adopted by five Wisconsin teacher preparation institutions.

WIP Work Stoppage Policy. Since the Wisconsin Improvement Program policy is the basis for the majority of work stoppage policies in Wisconsin teacher education institutions, that policy is presented in its entirety:

> When a work stoppage occurs in a cooperating school system where interns are assigned, it is the policy of the Wisconsin Improvement Program that interns be declared non-participants to either party involved. Interns will remain on a standby basis, without pay, during the period of time when schools are closed or during the period of time when schools are declared open without resolve of conflicting issues between the Board of Education and the Local Teacher Association.
>
> This policy is declared, not to favor one side or the other, but to realistically recognize the intern's status as a non-participant in the negotiation process; as a temporary assignee to the school system; and to protect all parties in the intern program from conflict and concern. If this policy is not a recognized condition to either party in a local school system, interns are not to be assigned to said system for their internship. (1)

Since the internship through the Wisconsin Improvement Program involves a "contract" between the teacher education student (intern) and the school district, special circumstances exist for these students which remove them from exclusive control of the teacher education institution. As a result, interns are subject to the policies of 1) the Wisconsin Improvement Program, 2) the school district to which they are assigned, and 3) the teacher preparation institution providing supervision and granting the appropriate credit. The special circumstances of the intern are further emphasized by the fact that the Department of Public Instruction issues intern certification to students involved in such programs.

Interpretation of the WIP work stoppage policy has altered its character and will no doubt cause it to be modified in the future. One recent interpretation of the WIP policy presents the possibility of terminating the internship in case of an extended work stoppage. Interns in one school district Fall Semester 1974 were notified that "if the conflict persists for a long period of time, it may be necessary to reassign (the intern) to a student teaching assignment at some later date."

Other Policies Governing Interns. The policies of two Wisconsin teacher preparation institutions, neither of which is a member of the WIP, allow interns the option of remaining in the schools during a work stoppage. However, in one case the policy allows interns who cross picket lines to withdraw, if they find their functions have changed from those for which they contracted; in the other case, policy indicates that the intern may participate with teachers in withdrawing services. The policies of both institutions allow their interns to withdraw from the work stoppage situation at its inception and, in one case, to report for alternative experiences without compersation. One of these policies included a statement unique among those found in this survey which urged that "provisions for the continued employment of the intern be included in the negotiated agreement and that non-recriminatory statements which apply to teachers also apply to interns."

University Policies Governing Student Teachers and Early Clinical Students. Teacher education institutions that reported using an adaptation of the WIP policy for student teachers and education students in early clinical experiences include the following additional elements in their policies:

1) In case of a work slowdown the student is required to function only if the cooperating teacher is working, otherwise the student is to return to campus and under no circumstances be used as a substitute teacher.

2) Students are not to be used as substitute teachers when the school system is operating without a contract.

3) In case of a work slowdown the clinical program student should not assume any responsibilities which are not being performed by a majority of the teachers in the building.

4) If the work stoppage is of such duration that the quality of the student teaching experience might be affected, the possibility of revising the student teaching assignment, either in length or location, remains the prerogative of the education faculty.

5) Experiences will be provided in another school system on a standby basis until the stoppage ends in the assigned school.

Policies of teacher preparation institutions which were obviously not an adaptation of that of the Wisconsin Improvement Program include several elements not specifically identified above:

1) In the first five days of the work stoppage students are to participate in various professional activities (i.e., curriculum work, reading, writing, field trips, visits to other school systems, or other activities recommended by the university supervisor); if the strike extends beyond five days, the student is to report for reassignment.

2) The student is not to become involved in the work stoppage under any circumstances.

3) If teachers withdraw their services, all clinical

program students are to be withdrawn from the school system and seek alternative experiences in their assigned education departments.

4) Contacts with school authorities will be made through the university supervisor or director of clinical experiences.

5) Under no circumstances are student teachers to cross picket lines.

6) Student teachers are to report immediately the possibility of a strike as well as its actual occurrence.

7) In concluding its policy, one institution indicates that copies are on file in the administrative offices of the school districts where students are placed.

Literature on Work Stoppage. Though the literature on work stoppage policies related specifically to student teaching is limited, Horton (2) does identify several concepts not indicated in the present survey. He generalizes that the policy statements of the one hundred institutions he surveyed is similar to the following: "'The student teacher is a guest of the school district and as such must not express an opinion or advocate any position in cases of strikes or sanctions.'" Horton presents ten guidelines which should have value for any teacher education institution reviewing its present work stoppage policy, or contemplating developing such a policy, for clinical program students. The basic concepts of three of these guidelines are presented below since none of these ideas was apparent in any policy identified in this survey. These guidelines call for:

1. Protecting the constitutional rights of student teachers.

2. Including a statement in the policy to the effect that ". . . the student teacher is acting as an individual and in no way reflects an official position of the university."
3. Allowing the student teacher to independently reach a decision about his/her activities in a strike situation after opportunity to examine all sides of the issues involved.

Although not a part of the work stoppage policy itself, an additional guideline presented by Horton may provide the key to the success of any work stoppage policy. That guideline calls for the involvement of the various clientele of teacher education programs in developing the work stoppage policy (i.e., teachers, school administrators, etc.).

Chaffee and Alley (3) identify two basic problems related to the effect of a work stoppage on student teachers. The first, indicated in policies presented above, relates to the matter of adequate time being available to the student teacher for actual teaching experiences. It is suggested that a policy be established requiring a minimum of experience or attainment of a particular level of competence by the student teacher before credit is granted for an experience interrupted by a work stoppage. The second problem identified is that of the relationship of the student teacher with the cooperating teacher, other teachers in the building, and the building administrator. According to Chaffee and Alley, the problem of relationships is particularly critical when the clinical program student is assigned more than one cooperating teacher and the cooperating teachers are divided on how to approach the work stoppage or slowdown.

These writers also emphasize that teacher educators must be aware of their primary obligation to their own students and not be maneuvered to the side of

administration or teachers in a work stoppage situation. In an approach not suggested in any policy or guideline identified above, Chaffee and Alley conclude that the problems created by work stoppages might be avoided through development of a carefully organized microteaching program as an alternative to student teaching.

Conclusions. None of the work stoppage policies reported in the survey of Wisconsin teacher education institutions indicates any consideration for protecting the constitutional rights of education students. Court decisions of the last decade, and laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, make it apparent that the rights of students must be respected by all educational institutions. Although not directly focused on student rights in off-campus practicum experiences, Haberman (4) has prepared a guide to the rights of education students. Such a guide to the constitutional rights of students provides a point of departure for those developing work stoppage policies in which these rights are recognized and protected.

In addition to the lack of consideration for the rights of education students, at least two other issues have been omitted from the policies identified in this survey and the meager literature available. The first of these issues is the situation in which a group other than teachers (i.e., janitors, teacher aides, etc.). goes on strike or slowdown and teachers act in concert. A second issue which has been omitted is that of the safety of the clinical program student. Perhaps it is assumed that, if safety is an issue, it will appear first in relation to the children in the schools, and thus the situation is more appropriately the jurisdiction of school boards and school administrators. However, if education students are allowed to exercise their constitutional rights, which could involve crossing picket lines and exercising freedom of speech, as well as other activities unattractive to one or more parties involved in a work

stoppage, various pressure tactics directed toward these students are always a possibility.

One teacher educator has suggested, perhaps facetiously, that teacher education institutions place their clinical program students in school districts which are in the second year of a two-year contract (or second semester of a one-year contract). Obviously such an option would not be available to all teacher education institutions because of location, number of placements required, and/or contracts with local school districts. However, such an approach seems as reasonable as substituting microteaching experience, extensive though it might be, for student teaching.

With this information in mind, as well as involvement of the various clientele of teacher education programs, adequate work stoppage policies covering education students in practicum experiences can be developed while there is thinking and consultation time. Obviously it is not possible to write policies which cover all contingencies; however, every effort should be made to develop the most comprehensive work stoppage policy possible. Hopefully, then, modification of this policy would be minimal should a work stoppage occur.

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